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ADDRESSES AND MEMORIALS

TO

HIS MAJESTY,

FROM THE

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AT JAMAICA,

VOTED IN THE

YEARS 1821 TO 1826 INCLUSIVE;

AND WHICH HAVE BEEN PRESENTED TO HIS MAJESTY
BY THE ISLAND AGENT.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY
OF JAMAICA.

ADDRESSES AND MEMORIALS

HIS MAJESTY

HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY AT JAMAICA

JANUARY 1871 TO THE END OF THE YEAR



HOUSE OF ASSEMBLY,

18th of December, 1828.

RESOLVED,

That it be an instruction to the Committee of Correspondence, to transmit to the Agent copies of all the Addresses and Memorials which have been made within the last ten years to His Majesty and his Government from this House; with a direction to him, to deliver the same to Sir George Murray, His Majesty's Colonial Minister; and to request that they may be taken into the consideration of His Majesty's Government, with a view of affording to the inhabitants of this island the relief prayed for, and which is essentially necessary to restore them to a moderate degree of prosperity; and that the Agent be directed to cause the same to be printed and distributed

By the House,

JOHN G. VIDAL,

Clerk to the Assembly.

House of Assembly,
18th of January, 1858.

Resolved,

That it be an instruction to the Committee of Correspondence to transmit to the Agent General all the addresses and memorials which have been made within the last ten years to the Ministry and the Government from this Island; with a request to him to deliver the same to the Hon. George Stanger, the Majesty's Colonial Minister; and to request that they may be taken into the consideration of His Majesty's Government with a view of affording to the inhabitants of this Island the relief of the taxes which is constantly necessary to restore them to a moderate degree of prosperity; and that the Agent be directed to cause the same to be printed and distributed.

By the House,

John A. V. V.

Clk to the Assembly.

ADDRESSES AND MEMORIALS,

&c. &c.

1821.

JAMAICA SS.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The humble Petition of the ASSEMBLY of
JAMAICA.

WE, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects,
the Assembly of Jamaica, humbly present to
your Majesty's consideration a statement of the
distresses which afflict this colony, and which
we cannot but apprehend will increase to its

destruction ; unless, through your Majesty's paternal interference, a timely remedy be applied. We lament the necessity of detailing grievances so lately complained of; but the pressure of unmitigated and unredressed suffering compels us to implore the royal attention to interests which, though remote, materially concern the national welfare. The principal staple commodity of the West Indies, sugar, is now reduced to a price so low as to be in most instances inadequate to pay the duties to your Majesty's revenue, the charges incurred in Great Britain, and the expenses of cultivation. The planter is debarred from the hope of profit, sees his industry requited by accumulating debt, and the prospect of utter ruin to himself and his creditors. The present state of the British market will give the price of 57*l.* for one ton of sugar, of moderate quality :—of this 27*l.* are paid for customs ; 15*l.* are deducted to defray the freight and other British charges ; and the small proportion of 15*l.* (not amounting to 3-11ths of the

gross produce) remains to the colonist as the share to which he is considered entitled, to reward his labour and risks, pay the annual expenses of his establishments, and the profit upon the large fixed capital he necessarily employs. No assistance is now offered, by the manufacture of rum, to defray the yearly contingencies of a sugar estate, the market price of that article being unequal to pay the cost of manufacture and other expenses. An over-supplied market is, we fear, not a temporary but advancing evil. The importation of sugar from the East Indies for home consumption, has for the last seven years been increasing, and still continues to increase. The additional duty imposed on sugar imported from the East has been proved by experience to have been estimated upon fallacious grounds, and not to have attained the object of full protection to the produce of the West Indian Colonies. The inhabitants of this island humbly press upon your Majesty's attention the injustice towards the old

Colonies, of any invasion of their right to an exclusive trade to the mother country in the productions of their soil. By the colonial system, established by England for her own aggrandisement, British shipping and British seamen are exclusively employed in our commerce ; no article of European growth or manufacture can be purchased unless imported from the mother country, which obtains the benefit of the carrying trade for our supply, and double freights, the colonies being burthened with the increase of charge. The whole of our produce is, by the same system, sent in British shipping to the markets of the mother country, and a net revenue of three millions and-a-half of duties on sugar alone is paid to support the Government. The value of this intercourse is felt, not only in what is received from the colony, but in what the colony makes the parent state produce, in the encouragement of her manufactures, the increase of her population, and the employment of her seamen. Are we not entitled to an

advantage in return for this code of prohibition, restraint, and taxation? The privilege of exclusively supplying the mother country with our staple commodities is the equivalent, which has had the sanction of long time and mutual recognition, and a ratification which has been designated as more solemn than any which an act of Parliament could confer. We see, with dread, the infringement of this compact. The introduction of sugar from the East is an innovation of comparatively small advantage, much less is it indispensable, to that part of the empire; but it will ensure the destruction of this.

The British Colonies feel the injury of the foreign slave trade being still pursued with unabated ardour. The markets of the continent, are nearly engrossed by the produce of foreign colonies, cultivated by labourers cheaply procured from Africa: and, at the same time, the continuance of the war duties, and the insufficient drawback allowed upon the exportation

from Great Britain of sugar of the British West Indies, have the effect of a bounty upon the cultivation of foreign settlements, and a check upon those of England.

Our supplies from the United States of America of lumber and provisions, which are essentially serviceable to aid the natural defects or the failures of our climate and soil, are straitened by the total interruption of that trade. The regulated and limited commerce, which the laws of trade and navigation permitted in British ships, is denied to us by the retaliatory system of the United States. Provisions, the growth of the United States, travel to us, when introduced, by a double voyage, and at an expense unnecessarily enhanced ; by this policy the subjects of your Majesty are stinted in their supplies, and are taxed, while the benefit is conferred on the ships of Spain and America, and on Spanish ports. A new system of intercourse, upon the basis of mutual benefit, per-

mitting the importation in American bottoms of the products of the United States, and the export of our staple commodities in return, would afford an important relief to the distresses of your Majesty's Colonies, and have the advantage of opening to British ships a trade from which they are now excluded ; and it may not be irrelevant here to observe, that the Americans have a free trade for sugar to the East Indies, while they are precluded taking any from us.

The discouragement of our industry, our crippled resources, the difficulty of raising the means, in addition to our large contributions to the revenue of the empire, for supporting the troops sent for our defence, and for defraying the other expenses of our insular establishment, are grievances which threaten our entire ruin. We approach your Majesty's throne with a confidence that relief will be found, and that your Majesty's Ministers will receive your royal command to propose to the consideration

of Parliament such measures as may restore
your loyal subjects to prosperity.

A true copy.

JOHN G. VIDAL,

Clerk to the Assembly.

1822.

JAMAICA SS.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The humble Address and Petition of the
ASSEMBLY of JAMAICA.

WE, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Assembly of Jamaica, once more approach your Majesty's throne with our complaints.

The people of this island look up to us, their representatives, to supplicate your Majesty's gracious attention to their distresses ; and it is our duty never to cease to pray for the paternal

consideration of your Majesty, while those distresses continue.

We, in the name of the entire population of this island, do beseech your Majesty to cause inquiry to be made into the nature of the evils that oppress us, that the truth of our grievances may be known to your Majesty, and such relief granted, as may fulfil the hopes of your people, and reward the loyalty which, even on the verge of destruction, has never forsaken us.

We do not press on your Majesty the particulars of our unfortunate situation; they are well known to your Majesty's ministers; but we fear, if your royal protection be not especially granted to us, that your Majesty's ministers will yet longer delay the relief on which depends the existence of this ancient colony.

We do not ask your Majesty to defend us against temporary and unavoidable evils. We have submitted, without repining, to the ravages of hurricanes, and have borne patiently the burthensome taxation that a state of war im-

poses. It is under the authority of the Imperial Parliament, which takes from us, in revenue duties, more than the income of our estates, that we are suffering; and it is to save our landholders and capitalists from ruin, and our labourers from absolute want, that we solicit the interference of our Sovereign.

When these gloomy apprehensions are realized—and your Majesty only can avert them—it is to be feared that the numerous dependants of the British inhabitants of the West India Islands, will not be persuaded that their masters are innocent of their miseries, and their rage and despair may involve our country in anarchy and blood.

We cannot doubt your Majesty's disposition to extend your gracious care over your whole empire, and to protect the weaker provinces from the exactions of the more powerful. We have no voice to make ourselves heard in the British Parliament; and if your Majesty does not deign to listen to us, the glory of your

royal crown may be a second time dimmed by the loss of the Islands of the West.

Ours are not petty and partial interests: a million of people, and a hundred millions of property, are staked on the issue of this appeal to your Majesty.

A true copy.

JOHN G. VIDAL,

Clerk to the Assembly.

1824.

JAMAICA SS.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The humble Address and Petition of the
ASSEMBLY of JAMAICA.

WE, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Assembly of Jamaica, beg leave to approach the throne, with renewed assurances of allegiance to your Government, and of warm and unalterable attachment to your Majesty's person and family.

Confiding in that paternal solicitude which watches over the remotest parts of the British

empire, we appeal to our Sovereign for protection from the fatal consequences which must inevitably result to this island, if the discussions which have taken place in the House of Commons be persisted in.

A spirit of revolt and insurrection has been excited, which can be attributed to no other cause than the impressions which the negro mind has received, that freedom has been granted by your Majesty; a delusion which not even your Majesty's royal proclamation has removed; and disturbances of a most alarming nature have, in consequence, agitated the whole island.

Our lives have been exposed to imminent risk and danger, and our properties have become depreciated to one half their value.

The suppression of the late disturbances has been attended with an expense of great magnitude, to the public, and to private individuals; and we see no prospect of being relieved from those evils, so long as the slaves remain in the

agitated state in which they are unhappily placed.

We, therefore, humbly implore your Majesty, that you will be graciously pleased to order your Ministers to lay before Parliament the situation to which this colony has been reduced, in order that we may receive compensation for the losses which we have already sustained, and that a just and fair indemnity may be provided against those consequences, which, we have too much reason to apprehend, will be produced by the measures which have emanated from the British Parliament.

A true copy.

JOHN G. VIDAL,

Clerk to the Assembly.

1825.

JAMAICA SS.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The humble Address and Petition of the
ASSEMBLY of JAMAICA.

WE, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Assembly of Jamaica, do most humbly offer to your Majesty the assurance of our continued attachment to your person, family, and government.

It is with sincere regret that we again approach the throne in the language of complaint; but our sufferings are increasing, and there is

no other means under Heaven whereby we can obtain redress.

Under the pressure of distress, and surrounded by difficulties, we represent to your Majesty, that while other classes of your subjects are relieved from taxation, and enactments are passed for the reduction of duties upon trade, increasing its activity and extent, and adding to the power and wealth of the empire, a fixed resolution seems to have been adopted by your Majesty's Ministers, that the high war duties upon the chief article of West India production, shall be continued without abatement. We submit to your Majesty's wisdom and impartial judgment, that such a system is in its principle unfair, and in its consequences fatal.

A coalition has been formed for the destruction of the Colonies; such a combination as never before existed, composed of materials the most discordant in themselves, but uniting with tenacity for one general object. Prejudices

have been excited to operate against us, founded on wicked and wilful misrepresentations, and we lament to say, that they pervade, more or less, every class of society in the parent state.

Before we were attacked by the agents of modern philanthropy, our slaves were a contented race of people, obedient to their masters, and obtaining from them in return protection and support. Reciprocal kindness had been formed which would have expanded, by progressive means, to the permanent advantage of all parties ; but mutual confidence has, unhappily, been removed, to give way to suspicion ; and wicked attempts have also been made to stir up a spirit of dissatisfaction amongst a meritorious class of our free population. The consequence is, that our endeavours to increase the comforts of the one, or the immunities of the other, have been greatly paralyzed. We are placed in a situation which renders every measure of amelioration dangerous, because whatever we do, even with the purest motive,

is wilfully misconstrued, and converted into the means of renewed excitement, to our prejudice.

It is our misfortune to inhabit a part of your Majesty's dominions where slavery has been long established by law ; but that ought not to be allowed to operate to our disadvantage, or to deprive us of the protection of those laws which afford to all alike the security of life and property.

We hold our possessions by indisputable right, founded upon British statutes ; and the Colonies were settled, on condition that slavery should be extended. The British nation participated in the advantages of the system when it was in most active operation, and it is extremely unjust to visit us with all the responsibility, at a time when slavery is assuming its mildest and least offensive form.

We protest against the measures recommended by your Majesty's Ministers, in pursuance of the resolutions of the House of Commons, as dangerous to life and property.

The injustice of forced innovations is greatly aggravated, because the Government, which has meditated an awful change in our long-established institutions, has provided no fund to compensate the loss to which property is thereby exposed, and which has already been deteriorated in value.

Under the new system contemplated by your Majesty's Ministers, the authority of the master over the slave will be abridged, and the quantity of labour to be performed by the latter will be so reduced, that it will be impossible to cultivate our properties to advantage. Hence mutual dissatisfaction will arise in the place of those feelings which formerly subsisted, and we shall have nothing to anticipate but discord and confusion, terminating most probably in the destruction of this, your Majesty's, valuable Colony.

Goaded, as we have been, to a state bordering on despair, we yet look to your Majesty for protection and relief. Our cause is that of

justice and of truth; and, relying on your Majesty's well-known regard for both, we confidently expect that you will not suffer a faithful and loyal people to fall a sacrifice to the influence of interested and designing men, nor to the equally dangerous speculations of mistaken benevolence.

A true copy,

JOHN G. VIDAL,

Clerk to the Assembly.

1826.

JAMAICA SS.

TO THE KING'S MOST EXCELLENT MAJESTY.

The humble Address and Memorial of the
ASSEMBLY of JAMAICA.

WE, your Majesty's dutiful and loyal subjects, the Assembly of Jamaica, approach your Majesty's throne with a narrative of the afflictions of the calumniated, oppressed, and impoverished people whom we represent.

Jamaica, once rich in the produce of her soil and the extent of her trade, flourished contented and happy.

When the nations of Europe were torn with convulsive efforts — while England herself appeared more than once to approach the brink of revolution—your Majesty's colony of Jamaica remained at peace within herself, unthreatened by foreign foes, unalarmed with any apprehensions of internal commotion. Such was Jamaica ! Now, how changed the scene—how melancholy the contrast she presents !

Commerce is deserting her shores ; the productions of her soil, overburthened with imposts, do not command, in the market of the parent state, a price sufficient to defray the charges of cultivation and manufacture ; signs of prosperity are no longer perceptible ; one universal gloom lowers around ; and ruin, in the most dreadful shape, and to all appearance inevitable, advances with rapid strides.

Heavy duties, imposed on the staple productions of our soil, during the progress of a long and most expensive war, remain unrepealed, after a lapse of twelve years of universal peace,

during which time your Majesty's subjects in Europe have been relieved from many millions of taxes.

This, however oppressive, is not the most grievous of the calamities under which we are sinking.

The pressure of poverty might have been borne with comparative resignation, under the fond hope that the claims of Jamaica would not be for ever overlooked, and that the time might arrive when her long-tried and oft-acknowledged loyalty to the throne, and attachment to the government and constitution, would call forth the favorable consideration of your Majesty's Ministers.

But new difficulties, fresh dangers, now assail us.

Three years ago, resolutions, calculated to destroy the confidence which once existed between the master and the slave, were introduced by one of your Majesty's Ministers and acceded to by the House of Commons.

The slave was soon taught, by inflammatory discussions in Parliament, and by false and calumnious productions issuing from the press in all parts of the United Kingdom, to consider his master, whom he had long looked up to for support and protection, as his tyrant and oppressor.

Rebellious conspiracies quickly manifested themselves in different parts of the Island, and were only put down by the dreadful but necessary sacrifices of the lives of many of the deluded victims of mistaken philanthropy, and of interested and designing persons.

It would have been natural to suppose that your Majesty's Ministers, warned by the mischiefs which had occurred, would have desisted from the further prosecution of projects fraught with so much danger ; but the same resolutions have since been adopted, at their suggestion, by the House of Peers, and have become the subject of instructions to your Majesty's representative in this island, who has submitted

them to us as the ground-work for legal enactments.

It has been avowed in Parliament that the extinction of slavery is the ultimate object of your Majesty's Ministers; and that, if the measures recommended as calculated to promote that object are not carried into effect by the Colonial Legislature, the aid of the Imperial Parliament will be invoked to insure its attainment. Our local knowledge convinces us that many of the measures recommended are impracticable, with equitable consideration of the rights of property; and that the attempt to carry them into execution would terminate in total ruin. Thus, then, we are threatened that the omnipotence of Parliament will be exerted to the destruction of property established under the sanction of numerous statutes, and the lives of your Majesty's faithful subjects endangered, because both Houses of Parliament, by unanimous resolutions, have so determined.

If preliminary investigations had taken place,

under the sanction of the British Government, into our colonial polity ; and the measures which are now considered by the Imperial Parliament as necessary for the amelioration of the condition of the slave population, had been the result of a fair and impartial inquiry, the co-operation of the legislature of Jamaica would not have been withheld for their adoption ; but a line of conduct has been pursued toward us, who are removed at a considerable distance from the parent state, different to that which is observed in England whenever individual property, of the most trifling value, is sought to be invaded for the purposes of public weal. The laws are there interposed for its protection ; and a jury of the country assess a full and ample compensation, before the proprietor is called upon to surrender his rights. To us the same measure of justice is denied ; and we are required to enact laws, which, in their consequences, may involve the island in ruin, without any solemn inquiry as to their expediency,

but merely under the suggestion of individuals, who have calumniated the colonies, on evidence derived from the most tainted sources.

We appeal to that code of laws, by which the slave is protected in his person and property, for a refutation of those aspersions which have been so lavishly bestowed on the inhabitants of the colonies. We appeal to those laws, as evincing the sincere desire by which the Assembly of Jamaica is actuated in promoting the welfare of the slave, so far as is consistent with the rights of property. Each succeeding session has conferred additional privileges and enjoyments ; and the amendments which have been introduced this year, ought to satisfy any unprejudiced mind that the appeal we make is founded in justice.

The consolidated slave law, passed in 1816, received an unqualified approbation from many of your Majesty's Ministers, as containing many salutary and humane provisions. Since that period the persons of females have been pro-

tected by legal enactments, in conformity with the spirit of the act of Elizabeth: sentence of death, by judicial authority, cannot be enforced without the sanction of the governor: manumissions have been encouraged and facilitated: the slave has been exempted from legal process on Saturday, that he may dispose of the produce of his labour on that day, and devote his Sunday to religious worship: curates throughout the several parishes of this island have been appointed, for the especial purpose of instructing our slave population in the tenets of the Christian faith: fees on baptism and marriage have been abolished: the slave has also been made capable of receiving bequests of personal property to any amount. These enactments emanated spontaneously from the humane and benevolent disposition, which has prompted us from time to time to revise our Slave Code; and, in strict conformity with that spirit, we have, during the present session, steadily pursued the same course, and have expunged all

those enactments which the policy of a remote period rendered imperative, but which, in the present day, are no longer called for, and appear harsh and unnecessary ; and have afforded still greater protection to the slave, by imposing further restrictions on the mode of punishment, and by extending to him, in common with any British subject, the benefit of a grand jury, thereby securing a two-fold investigation before guilt can be affixed to him. An advantage has also been conferred, which no British subject in the United Kingdom enjoys, of having counsel assigned, with liberty to address the jury on behalf of the slave, who may be put on his trial for any capital offence. The Sunday market has been abolished after the hour of eleven : marriage among our slaves has received legislative encouragement ; and the separation of families under judicial or other process, has been prohibited : the maintenance of infirm slaves has been enforced : the acquisition of personal property, which had been permitted

under the usage of the country, has been sanctioned and secured by law: Lastly, to obviate every possible objection that the enemies of our colonial system can urge, “that ample protection is not afforded by law” to our slaves, we have declared them competent to give evidence in criminal cases.

Our slave code, thus rendered as perfect as exsiting circumstances will admit, contains provisions more favourable to the slave than, perhaps, may be consistent with sound policy. Here then we must pause. We cannot, consistently with our duties to our constituents, consent to go a step further, without a definite pledge from Parliament, of ample compensation for any injury which may result from measures recommended by them.

During the early part of the present year, your Majesty's Ministers, as if determined in every respect to infringe the institutions of the Colonies, directed the collection, and in part the appropriation, by the officers of the customs

of duties which had hitherto been received by our receiver-general, and applied to the uses directed by the legislature of the island. Thus, in direct violation of the British Act 18 Geo, 3, chap. 12, and of the exclusive right of the legislature of this island to appropriate duties collected within this island, your Majesty's Ministers have, of their own authority, imposed a fresh burthen on our revenues, not less oppressive to the people of Jamaica, than destructive of our constitutional rights.

We have thus laid before your Majesty no exaggerated detail of the calamities under which we labour, and which threaten, at no distant period, to effect the dismemberment from your empire of this valuable colony. To these accumulated evils it is impossible we can silently submit.

To your Majesty, therefore, we appeal.

Listen, gracious Sire, to the prayer of your faithful subjects. The paternal interference in our behalf of your royal power, can alone avert

the impending ruin. With unshaken loyalty, therefore, and dutiful affection to your person, we implore your Majesty to call the attention of the Imperial Parliament to the war duties on our produce, with a view to their repeal; to mark your disapprobation of the unconstitutional interference of your Ministers with our revenue and right of internal legislation; and, should it be your Majesty's pleasure that the resolutions of Parliament, and consequent instructions to your Majesty's representative, be again pressed upon us, that they be accompanied with an act of Parliament to secure that ample compensation, without which we never can consent to their adoption.

A true copy.

JOHN G. VIDAL,

Clerk to the Assembly.

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John C. Vidal,
London,
Clerk to the Assembly.

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